

FEDERAL REAUTHORIZATION RELATED UPDATE

California Congressman George Miller, Ranking Minority Member of the Education and the Workforce Committee is expected to introduce a Child Nutrition Reauthorization bill within the next two weeks.

Senator Thad Cochran, Chairman of the Agriculture Committee has not issued a Reauthorization bill and there are no *Senate* Reauthorization hearings scheduled for the months of July or August.

The House Majority Leader Tom DeLay plans to fast track the *appropriation* schedule allowing Congress to adjourn by October 3. According to "The Hill", his goal is to finish all 13 bills by the August recess.

It was anticipated, that the House Education and Workforce Committee would not be taking up the Child Nutrition Program Reauthorization up until the Fall. However, House hearings have been scheduled in the Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Education Reform titled: "Food for Thought: How to Improve Child Nutrition Programs, at 10:00 a.m. in Room 2175, Rayburn HOB. The Witnesses have not been announced.

Chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, John Boehner, (R) Ohio has just issued the following fact sheet:

Child Nutrition

Reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 and the National School Lunch Act is an important objective for the House Education and the Workforce Committee during the 108th Congress. It is an important opportunity to improve the current system and fix problems in existing programs that have a negative impact on children.

A healthful diet is necessary for children to achieve full physical development and long-term health and is critical for a child's academic success in school. Studies show that diet affects children's ability to learn.

Obesity among American children has become an "epidemic," according to public health experts. Childhood obesity has skyrocketed since the 1970s. Obesity and weight problems affect an estimated 10 million children in the U.S. The problem appears most serious among low-income and minority children.

Republicans believe every child deserves a school environment that promotes healthy food choices and regular physical activity to enhance academic achievement. Local schools should be supported in their efforts to create such an environment, and given the flexibility they need to do so.

Republicans have several goals for improving child nutrition programs:

- **Ensure access.** Republicans will work to ensure that child nutrition programs are accessible to all children who are eligible for assistance.

- **Promote nutrition and health.** Republicans want to ensure that child nutrition programs achieve the goal of safeguarding the health and well being of the nation's children. Child nutrition programs should contribute to children's growth and development by promoting healthy food choices and physical activity. Nutrition education programs, messages about the importance of good nutrition, and exposure to positive role models in school, communities, and at home will help children to understand the importance of a balanced diet and regular physical activity.
- **Strengthen accountability.** The reauthorization will provide an opportunity to implement stricter accountability measures and other administrative improvements needed to restore the integrity of the school meal program. **Schools are failing to accurately identify the number of students who are eligible to receive free- or reduced-price school meals. As a result, the government is picking up the tab for thousands of extra school meals provided to kids who aren't financially eligible for this assistance at a cost of \$1 billion a year to taxpayers. Because funding formulas for several key State and Federal education programs are based on the number of students eligible for free- and reduced-price meals, some schools are receiving extra funding at the expense of well deserving schools. Republicans are committed to developing and implementing a new system for determining school meal eligibility. The new system will ensure accurate counts of certified free- and reduced-price meals by holding schools accountable for these counts.**

Rep. Mike Castle, chairman of the House Education Reform Subcommittee and a leading voice in Congress on child nutrition, introduced legislation in 2002 that would authorize grants to fund pilot programs at both the state and local levels to encourage the development and implementation of programs to promote healthy eating and increased physical activity among children.

Despite the limited resources that already exist, some advocate the establishment of "universal" school meal entitlement programs that would provide free meals to all children regardless of family income. However, preliminary findings from a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture found that providing a free breakfast to all students resulted in no consistent pattern of positive effects on student outcomes. While significantly more children participated in the breakfast program in schools where breakfast was universally-free, the meal provided no added benefit in improving academic achievement, school attendance and tardiness, classroom behavior and attentiveness, and dietary status. Republicans believe Federal resources are most appropriately used when they target financial support to families who need assistance in providing healthy, well-balanced meals.

Childhood obesity is becoming a major health problem in the United States, and studies suggest overweight children are significantly more likely to become overweight/obese adults. Diet-related deaths are estimated to cost the nation \$148 billion per year. Poor diet and physical inactivity contribute to a long list of chronic diseases and are responsible for over 300,000 deaths each year. Many of these diseases (or risk factors) are now diagnosed in children. Type II diabetes, which is largely related to poor diet and physical inactivity, has risen 50 percent between 1990 and 2000, and is becoming more prevalent in adolescents and teens. A quarter of children have high cholesterol, blood pressure or other early warning signs for diabetes.